

ucsc - Faculty

# Scandal Flares Up

Elizabeth Kadetsky

6-9-88 SUN

As UCSC Chancellor Robert Stevens concludes his first year in the prestigious ranks of University of California administrators, his one nagging hiring scandal remains unresolved. Stevens came under fire this March when *The Sun* reported that he was in the midst of approving a highly irregular and controversial appointment for the husband of acting Academic Vice Chancellor Isebill "Ronnie" Gruhn.

Since that story broke, Gruhn's husband—Oberlin College faculty member Dale Johnson—has been awarded a temporary UCSC appointment as a professor of East Asian studies. Meanwhile Chancellor Stevens has tried to quell faculty charges of "nepotism" and "abuse of power," claiming he and Gruhn were at the brunt of "a disturbing amount of distortion and error." And, given the appearance of calm in offices of UCSC's academic administration, the dust of faculty ire surrounding the appointment has temporarily settled.

However, *The Sun* has learned that on at least two counts the matter is far from resolved.

Speculation has long been in the air as to why Johnson's temporary appointment was not advanced until this winter. By the time Stevens set the wheels of the temporary hire in motion, eight months had lapsed since he promised Gruhn he would

seek the appointment, and Johnson had already been rejected in November for a permanent UCSC position as a professor of Chinese literature.

*The Sun* has now confirmed rumors that, according to Stevens, he delayed the temporary appointment because Gruhn told him that her husband was a shoo-in for the permanent job on the literature board. The temporary appointment, she allegedly said, was patently unnecessary. At a February meeting of the Senate Advisory Committee, an advisory body to the chancellor made up of eight high-level faculty members, Stevens confided that Gruhn had misjudged her husband's credentials, leaving Stevens in the embarrassing position of having to request a visiting appointment after it was common knowledge that Johnson had been turned down for the permanent job. According to one first-hand account, Stevens commented, "That's why we have laws against nepotism."

Whether or not this fact resolves the debate over the propriety of the appointment is unclear. However, this story does shed light on one crucial issue. Gruhn, who is entrusted with all matters related to academic planning, had a hand in upgrading the permanent position for which Johnson applied to a "full" rather than non-tenured position shortly after Stevens agreed to try to hire her husband.

## UCSC Heralds New Chancellor

It was an event full of pomp and color, replete with solemn academic robes, representatives from over 100 top academic institutions across the country, and a reported price tag of over \$50,000 to pay for it all. It was an event that required an audience.

But although UCSC went to great lengths to ensure the presence of a large student participation, even officially canceling classes for the day, last week's inauguration of Chancellor Robert Stevens clearly established that there were to be limits on that participation.

Part of the immense expenditures for the June 1 ceremony went to bring in additional campus police from UC Berkeley and UC Davis to deal with anticipated student protests. Though a final count on protesters barely exceeded 100, police handed out flyers indicating that the occasion was not one of "open discussion," and relegated demonstrators to areas far from the proceedings in the campus upper quarry. Campus police also searched backpacks and removed literature until the ceremony

was over.

"To me it sounds like, Welcome to the oppressive country of your choice," said student activist Aaron Peskin, who was arrested after confronting police on the legality of the searches. According to Peskin, he was not even part of the demonstration but felt the removal of handout materials was a violation of students' rights. Most of the material confiscated concerned issues surrounding campus growth, divestment from South Africa and the call for an ethnic studies board, according to Peskin.

"I think students handing out literature is becoming of an educational institution. The university should not just tolerate it, but encourage it," Peskin said.

But if the number of protesters was kept to a minimum, their issues were brought to the attention of the packed audience by speeches from students and administrators alike during the ceremony.

Student Union Assembly Chair Asher Brauner spoke to the assembly and called for audience support by standing up for such issues as cutting UC ties to Law-

rence Livermore weapons labs, divestment from South Africa, slow growth and establishing an ethnic studies program. While most students present stood for all those issues, many UCSC faculty conspicuously remained seated when it came to slowed growth. During the centerpiece speech of the inauguration, Stevens advocated some of those positions, while scolding students on others.

"If I am less sympathetic than some to the no-growth view... it is because I am conscious that we owe a great deal... to the next generation of Californians," said Stevens, noting that the affluence of the student population at Santa Cruz and their "bourgeois sentiments" hardly puts them in a position to understand the growth issue.

Stevens, who has already been chancellor for over a year, also took note of the need to accommodate minority students into the UC curriculum, calling California a state where "the minorities are about to become the majority."

—Clay Evans

band.

The upgrade immediately smacked of abuse to the faculty members who knew that Johnson, a tenured professor, had applied for the job. Gruhn

has since denied she meant to link the position to her husband, and many of her colleagues have gone so far as to deny that Johnson even applied for the position. But if the story

Stevens told the SAC in February is true, it is apparent that Gruhn *did* see her husband as a prime contender for the position when she approved the upgrade.

According to the California Political Reform Act of 1974, a University of California official who "obligate[s] or commit[s] the University to any course of action... in which he knows or has reason to know he has a financial interest" is toying with conflict of interest. A "financial interest" includes the individual's immediate family. A known violator of this code could be subject to a \$10,000 fine.

Meanwhile, *The Sun* has also confirmed rumors that the chancellor's attempt to hire Johnson took another twist this April when he returned to the SAC with a second justification for the eight-month delay. He then said that it was Dean of Humanities Michael Cowan and, one infers, not Gruhn at all, who advised that the appointment be delayed through the winter. In fact, Cowan confirmed that he told Stevens, "It probably made sense to have Johnson be looked at for the permanent position" before the temporary appointment be moved ahead. "It was an issue of programmatic need," Cowan told *The Sun*, which could not be addressed until after the administration knew the November results of the literature board search. If the permanent position for Chinese literature was filled, there would be little need for Johnson's visiting position as an East Asian studies professor. Whether or not this contradicts Stevens's original story laying blame on Gruhn remains ambiguous, but what is clear is that Stevens and Gruhn were waiting for the results of Johnson's application before recommending a temporary hire.

The issue of this application is per-  
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(from preceding page)

haps the most unresolved topic in the ongoing controversy. A number of faculty members have rushed to Gruhn's defense with the claim that Johnson never applied for the permanent literature position, thus denying any connection between Gruhn's office and her husband's consideration for this job. Community Studies professor Carter Wilson, for instance,

angrily told *The Sun* that Johnson was not a candidate after *The Sun* had printed that he had been.

At least one other professor has rebuffed Wilson's charge as patent "disinformation." But the question may be a matter of semantics. According to Dean of Humanities Cowan, Johnson wrote a letter to the humanities board in the fall, requesting that he be considered for any positions

available at the time: Cowan forwarded the letter to the literature board, which then gathered the appropriate documents to complete Johnson's file. In Cowan's interpretation, Johnson made it clear that his letter could be considered an application. "From my viewpoint, he applied," said Cowan.